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I'm Kasey Pregler, a Master's degree student from the Ecology & Evolutionary Biology department at the University of Connecticut. I'm a Connecticut native, and the investments the state has already made in UConn made the Biology program there my choice as an undergraduate. I believe that I got a world-class education from the faculty that UConn 2000 attracted. But I got it in the Torrey Life Sciences building. Built in the early 1960's, Torrey is one of the primary biology education and research facilities at the University of Connecticut, shared by all the biology departments. Students from every STEM major pass through the doors of Torrey at some point during their undergraduate career. When I started back in 2007, Torrey was in much worse shape than it is today. The floors would crack as you walked through the halls due to deteriorating floor tiles and in one of my ecology labs a ceiling tile fell on a student's head during class.

It has been six years since I started at UConn, and the campus is dramatically different because of the investments the state has made. We have new lecture halls, new dorms, and a student union that is an attractive hive of activity. But in the Torrey classroom where as a graduate teaching assistant I hold office hours to tutor the states' future STEM workers, the pile of fallen ceiling tiles continues to grow. Leaking ceilings prompt us to cover computers in our teaching labs with garbage bags before snow or rainstorms in fear of being damaged. The frequency of bursting pipes has reinforced not leaving anything of value on the floor.

The UConn facilities staff has worked hard to repair Torrey over the years, but new paint and linoleum cannot change the fact that underneath the building is outdated, and deteriorating. UConn is the leading public university in the state; how can we expect to properly educate the science workers our state will need to grow the economy without updating our primary lab education building? How can we recruit the best STEM faculty when their offices and labs will be in this outdated building? Some classrooms have been repaired but there is still a long way to go to bring this building into the 21st century and in competition with other leading universities. I urge you to support STEM funding for the renovation of old science buildings like Torrey Life Sciences. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.